

1385

THE  
UTILITY  
OF AN  
UNION  
BETWEEN

*R* Great Britain and Ireland,  
CONSIDERED,

By a FRIEND to BOTH COUNTRIES.

---

Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought unto desolation  
Vis unita fortior.

---

---

D U B L I N:

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, (108) GRAFTON-STREET.

---

M.DCC.LXXXVII.



---

---

## P R E F A C E.

**I**N the course of the last session of parliament the Lord Chancellor threw out an idea to this effect, that a Union with Ireland was much to be wished.

THE writer of the following sheets had often heard this matter talked over in a cursory way in private companies consisting of persons of both countries: but it was generally treated rather as mere matter of conversation than as a subject either of much consequence, or ever likely to occupy the cares and attention of either Legislature, the nature of the present relative situation of the countries being considered so sufficiently advantageous to both, as to render any alteration in the mode of the connection unnecessary.

BUT when at the above-mentioned period, and in the assembly of the Peers of Great-Britain, this sentiment was held out by that great authority, whose consummate knowledge both of the nature of the constitution, and also the true interests of the British empire, stamp a dignity upon and give weight to



every opinion which has once received the sanction of his approbation, the subject in question began deeply to occupy the mind of the writer: the little attention hitherto paid to a matter of such consequence, appeared to him as culpable as it was extraordinary; and as he continued to view it in its different relations and consequences, and to investigate more minutely all its parts, its importance became more and more discernible. An opportunity, which some residence in Ireland, in the course of the last summer, presented of making observations on the state of that country, the dispositions of various descriptions of her inhabitants, her wants, and the most effectual remedies for them, confirmed him most strongly in the sentiment of the advantages an Union would be to her as well as to the State at large. He now ventures to publish those reasons which impressed so strongly on his mind the importance of this measure; and he hopes the greatness and extensive nature of the subject, and the difficulty attending its investigation, will apologise for such defects as may occur in the course of the following composition.

THE



---

---

THE  
UTILITY  
OF AN  
UNION  
BETWEEN  
Great Britain and Ireland.

---

**G**REAT BRITAIN and Ireland compose the whole of the British Empire in Europe. Neither distance of situation, extent of country, or number of people, render the representation of the whole, in one legislative body, impracticable or inexpedient. The population of the two kingdoms does not exceed thirteen millions; and Dublin, the capital of Ireland, is at no greater distance from London than Edinburgh. The objection of distance is therefore trivial in the extreme. Nor is that of any inconvenience arising from the assembly of Representatives becoming too numerous by some addition, of greater force. Some have thought that the  
head

head would be too large for the body, without considering that a pillar of a large size can bear a proportionate capital. The greatest councils of all free states are extremely numerous. And indeed a Senate, composed of a considerable number, is congenial to the nature of a free government, and agreeable to the feelings of a free people. Mankind naturally, and with justice, repose a larger share of confidence in the united abilities of a considerable number, than in the dark, unseen measures of the few. Every measure, that comes before the former, is sifted to the bottom, ere it pass into a law. Nor can the designs of ambition or sedition steal unperceived and unnoticed by the posts of so many centinels, whatever disguise they may assume. Corruption too finds it more difficult to practise her arts of seduction on the morals of a body of independent men, whose interests must be essentially interwoven with that of their constituents; whereas she can at pleasure apply herself with the powerful persuasives of titles and of wealth to glut the vanity, the ambition, or the avarice of the few.— Councils composed of but few, have ever therefore been the plan of monarchies as they grew towards despotism: while liberty ever has, and ever will, assign the guardianship of her sacred rights to the discernment, watchfulness, and integrity of numbers; only avoiding such a selection or such excess as might lead to the dangerous severity of aristocratic, or the tumultuous confusion of democratic states\*.

\* Is it a hazardous assertion, that if America had sent representatives to the British parliament, the United States had continued a part of the British empire? Is there a hope that she may yet wish, on those fair and equalizing terms, a connection with Britain? If not, may the remedy, too late to regain America, be applied to the perpetual preservation of Ireland?

The

The two kingdoms are, in the nature of their constitution at this moment, nearly two distinct, independent, unconnected kingdoms, excepting that they are both subject to one monarch. They have two courts, two distinct parliaments, and, both in politics and commerce, different interests, arising from the very nature of their present unconnected situations. Time was when Ireland groaned under the pressure of absolute British power; but at a critical period, and that no very remote one, the justice of Great Britain deigned to grant to the spirit and wisdom of Ireland, that freedom both of constitution and commerce which she was no longer in a situation to with-hold. Almost the only traces which now remain of a connection exist in the appointment of a viceroy. But the splendor of a court must be fatal by its example of luxury, to a country so moderately wealthy as Ireland; and the fortunes of the great men in any free state being exhausted, the sale of their country's rights remains the only support of a disgraceful existence. Besides, the government by a viceroy \* is perhaps, not altogether so well adapted to a kingdom, as to that species of dependent country denominated a province. There is a sort of pride, or of spirit, inherent in the people who consider themselves entitled to rank under the former mode of government, that brooks not to be levelled to the situation of persons coming under the latter description.—Hence a perpetual source of smothered discontent, which has † from time to time broke out in coun-

\* That sort of government, or by Lords Justices, is certainly necessary, till that most desirable event, an Union, can be accomplished.

† Witness the colonies of ancient Rome, and in our time the Spanish colonies in South America, who are daily revolting.



tries governed by a deputation of the regal authority ; a discontent dangerous in proportion to the number and power of the discontented ; a deputation, which, if not chilling to the ardor of loyalty, is favourable to the designs of the ill-affected ; a deputation which extreme distance, indeed, may excuse, and a great, constant, unalterable inferiority may, from the inevitable necessity of the thing, bear with content. Nor is it more conducive to the civilization of a country not yet arrived at the highest pitch of refinement. The rays of majesty, transmitted through the dusky medium of a deputed power, give but a Saturnine light, and a feeble heat unfavourable to the growth of refinement and manners. 'Tis a sun shorn of his beams, or rather, a planet shining with a borrowed radiance.

The parliaments of the two countries suffer at this time all the inconveniencies to which the States of Holland are subject. An extreme dilatoriness attends the deliberations of so many councils and so many senates. A door is opened, and time given for much intrigue to both parties. A dangerous delay accompanies the progress of measures, which, from the internal nature of the states themselves as well of foreign powers, the interest of the country often requires should be carried into execution with dispatch. Besides, a mutual jealousy interferes to disunite still wider two bodies already so far separated. The eye of suspicion watches every measure proposed by either party, in which the other is concerned. The remembrance of lost power by the one, and the fear of an attempt to regain it operating on the minds of the other senate, feeds and nourishes disaffection and mistrust. At present, there is as much delay, difficulty, and opposition to the arrangement of any matter

matter of politics or commerce with Ireland, as in a treaty with a foreign court: a circumstance that may, if not remedied by the single possible mode, an Union, whenever a foreign war breaks out, be attended with fatal consequences to both countries.

Ireland contains about three millions of people. The greater part of these are Roman Catholics. A people, from the very essence of their religion more attached to a foreign power, than to their own constitution. Should a war break out, and the military force be draughted off to distant parts, their elasticity might act powerfully when the weight that kept it down were removed. Their attachment to a foreign power, and the idea of a title to the lands the rebellions of their ancestors legally and in an unconstitutional war forfeited, might swell and rise to a height that would overflow the narrow and shallow limits distant war could afford to embank it at home.

An argument from recent tranquillity, where opposition were useless, avails not. The human mind fluctuates as the waves of ocean; but their former cruelties are notorious. The blood of the wretched victims of the Irish massacre cries aloud from the ground, not to revenge, but to remember their unmerited martyrdom. A Union would deprive all persons of that persuasion of the smallest hopes ever to establish a foreign religion, or introduce a foreign constitution and government. But, situated as the two countries now are, the weight of numbers who, perhaps, may wish for a revolution, requires a fatiguing intense vigilance to guard against the accomplishment of dangerous designs such persons might possibly entertain. For, although many of the better informed Catholics, in both countries, may have the discernment to perceive,



ceive, that the silken cords with which a free constitution ties up the hands of such subjects from whom mischief might be apprehended, are infinitely more tolerable even to such, than the galling fetters with which despotism often loads both guilt and innocence; and, though it is even to be supposed that the indulgencies granted them in both kingdoms of late years may have attached many from affection to the present government and our state; yet that this is universal is scarcely to be expected. \*

It has surprised many that France, so ambitious of an extensive empire, has made so few exertions to separate Ireland from the British empire, and unite her to herself. Perhaps there exists no territory whatsoever, that could bring so many advantages, and is altogether so adapted to supply her wants. Whoever only casts an eye on the map of the world will discern, that with the harbour of Brest, the cove of Cork would render her navy arbitress of universal commerce, as far as the advantageous situation of ports can.

And whoever knows France will allow the fine pasturage of Ireland, and her produce, beef, butter, and wool, of all which she now procures large quantities, would supply the deficiency of those articles to a soil more famed for the culture of the vine, the produce of silk and all sorts of grain: of all which Ireland would take to a considerable amount.

The linens of the latter, the best in the world at the price, would answer the use of the French

\* There is a wide difference between the tempers of the Catholics near the centre and those who inhabit the more remote parts of the empire. The outrages of white boys, right boys, and other riotous bodies of Catholics, are proof sufficient.

better



better and come cheaper to them than those of the Low Countries. Add to these the acquisition of three millions of a hardy, warlike, and, from their insular situation and commerce, a maritime race of men; and the ease with which a conquest once made might be maintained, by transferring the arms from the Protestants to the Catholics, whose religion, it is to be feared, would represent loyalty to France a sentiment of piety, and whose numbers would give superior power. All these and many other advantages would repay France any expence she might employ in the purchase. Till the late commonly called American war, the British navy kept the fleets of the house of Bourbon at Bay. Her superiority in point of equipment, maritime skill, and the activity of the sailors, counterbalanced whatever advantages the others might pretend to from number of ships and men. While she possessed the dominion of the seas, any attempt to wrest an adjacent island out of her hands, were only a display of vain impotence. But when during the late calamitous war, the combined fleets rode triumphant in the channel, they gave to Britain a solemn lesson, that the empire of the seas was no longer her's. Had they been prepared at that moment to invade Ireland, who could have bade defiance to her power? Where were our fleets and armies? On what distant coast roared the British lion? The Protestant volunteers were the only body of men who could guard the coasts of Ireland, strike terror into their foes, and prevent a junction between the disaffected at home, their foreign allies and our enemies. Now, the Gallic fleet, taught by Britain the art of naval war, traverses the main no longer an unwieldy line of battle, but a well-appointed, well-conducted, terrific navy. This hour is an interval of peace;

but what will the next be? The torch of war, once lighted up, spreads far and wide its destructive flames, nor ceases its rapid and devouring progress, till one general conflagration consumes myriads of the human race. And should England, to support her own honour, or to curb the ambition of foreign States, or to preserve and maintain the balance of power in Europe, be compelled to take an active part in the hostilities which at this moment hang in awful suspense over the peace of Europe, it is highly probable that Ireland may become an object of contention between France and us. It is at least human prudence to guard against an event, by the application of that perhaps the only certain and successful precaution, an Union, which will so cement the interests of the two countries, and give to both such an accession of strength, as will greatly conduce to counteract the designs any foreign power may entertain of separating for ever two countries, whose object should be to strengthen and enrich each other, and to support their mutual honours.

The advantages which would accrue to both countries from an Union, are many and important. England would acquire an addition of territory and of people. Her constitution would be more complete, and her commerce more extended, by the partnership. Ireland, on her part, would more fully participate the British constitution, trade and police; her peers be British peers, and her senators possess a voice in the British Parliament. The empire would be more compact, and consequently her force greater: every design to disunite the empire, either by domestic malecontents, or foreign enemies, wither in the bud: the manners, the morals, and the British spirit of freedom, become more largely diffused through those ranks of  
the



the Irish, to whom they may as yet have omitted to extend their salutary influence; odious distinctions, and national reflections would be absorbed and lost in the Union: the inconveniencies arising from divided and too often jarring councils, be removed; the mode of connection between the two countries be more honourable. And as the reputation of a country generally bears a portion to its civilization and culture of the useful arts of life, probably, multitudes from foreign countries, invited by the mild climate, and fertile soil of Ireland, would pour in, and establish useful manufactures, the riches of which flowing to the heart, and thence returning to the extremities of the empire, would be a circulation nutritious of strength, power, and honour. For most foreigners admire and love the constitution of England: and the advantages that would accrue from that affection, are greatly lost, by the high price of provisions, and a too much reserve and contempt for strangers; very flattering to selfish pride, but injurious to the wealth of the State.

The persons from whom an objection to an Union may most reasonably be expected, are in the first place; those peers, who, as an entire conjunction of the two Legislatures could scarcely be expected, might apprehend a diminution of consequence, should an Union take place. But, besides the splendor of that dignity which results from the sacrifice of private interest on the altar of public weal, this disadvantage would, in some degree, be counterbalanced by their being admitted to become Peers of Great Britain, with all the privileges annexed to that high honour, that of voting in Parliament only excepted. But here it may be observed, that 'tis by no means requisite to adopt the precise articles of the Scottish union in that



that with Ireland. The circumstances of the times, the difference of situation, and the temper of mankind at this period, might render such an adherence a bar to the connection. A certain liberality on the part of Great Britain, must mark every step taken to effect the great purpose : for, in the present improved state of Irish politics and commerce, the resignation of her national legislature, for the advantage of the empire at large, is a costly sacrifice, and merits a propitious and noble return. And it may be observed, speaking of the Peerage, that decisions on appeals to that august tribunal from Ireland, will lose nothing of their weight, by acquiring the additional support of the Judges and Peers of England. It perhaps also might be impolitic, in carrying on this work of such utility to the empire, to deprive the Peers of Ireland of a privilege they in the present alienated state of the two countries enjoy, that of being eligible to a seat in the Commons of the empire.

In the second place, an objection is to be expected to this business from those gentlemen, who at present possessing a seat in the Irish House of Commons might possibly be deprived, by an Union, of any share in the legislature. But this objection is not so weighty as at first it may appear, for such is the liberal nature and free principle of the British constitution, that every freeholder is, in fact, a legislator by representation. And though some rich and antient families both in counties and cities have frequently pretended to a vague sort of hereditary right to a seat in the Commons, their claim has been found unsupported by constitutional theory and septennial practice ; the claim itself is a libel on the constitution. If, however,

however, the weal of the empire demand a Union, private interest must give way; nor must the whole suffer for ever to promote the interest, much less to gratify the ambition of a small part. But the process of this great work presents an opportunity of taking a step so long wished by the friends of their country. If it should be imagined, that, by the addition of so considerable a body, the assemblies of parliament should prove too numerous, and become unwieldy from their bulk; a measure might be adopted which at the same moment would obviate this objection, satisfy the minds of true patriots, and, while it lightened the weight, encrease the strength, and preserve the balance of the branches of the constitution, and, at the same time, leave the franchises of electors unimpaired. It is well known that the constitution of borough representation is exceedingly unequal\*:—while some large and rich cities send no members to parliament, others, inferior in population, wealth, or consequence, return a great many. In some cases the number of electors nearly equals that of the elected, and in very many the mandate of an individual, in direct violation of the principles of the constitution, and the freedom of election, confers the honour of seats in parliament on dependent minions, ready to yield a tame obedience to the maxims, however injurious to the State, of him who raised them to that unmerited eminence.

This dread exercise of aristocratic influence, contains sources of weighty ills that may, on some future day, destroy the balance of the legislative powers.

\* As corruption is the cause of rottenness, they are very properly termed rotten boroughs.

And

And though its destructive tendency may not be instantly felt, 'twere wisdom in the wary pilots who guide the helm of states, to imitate the skilful mariners in the south Seas, who break the water spouts in the distant air, whose nearer approach admitted would overwhelm the vessel in the depths of ocean. This danger to the British state might be prevented, while, by adding to the parliament the representatives of Ireland, certain boroughs in both kingdoms, in lieu of chusing separately, should conjointly with the neighbouring boroughs return the members. By this means no man would be disfranchised, no burg or city unrepresented, much contest and heat would be avoided, and the empire still be as fully represented, and more honourably than heretofore. The extension of the right of voting to the adjacent boroughs or hundreds is neither unconstitutional or novel, precedents being established in the cases of Shaftsbury and New Shoreham. There are, however, certain persons, whose private interests and dangerous influence, risking a diminution by the necessary alterations arising of course from the very lapse of time, and the flux and changes of all human institutions, have described a monster of hideous aspect, and called it innovation; while others, more disinterested and less timid, have harnessed the animal to the state chariot, and found him tractable though spirited, and highly useful on rugged, dangerous, and critical roads, and at those dark times when the sun of Britain was shrouded in dark clouds of despotism or popular confusion. In fact, every great political event which has taken place since the unfortunate introduction of the feudal system by the Norman Conqueror, has been an innovation on the plan of government he attempted



tempted to establish\*. Magna Charta was an innovation. The present form of the distinction of the branches of the legislature was an innovation. That great guardian of our liberties, the statute that assigned to the representatives of the people the privilege of granting to, or withholding subsidies from, the Crown, known by the name of Statutum de tallagia non concedendo, was an innovation. The exclusion of a popish family from the Crown of England was a glorious innovation. The Union with Scotland was an innovation. And so far have our ancestors testified their approbation of such innovations as may produce advantage to the state, that the statutes† declare it treason to assert that the three branches of the legislature have not a right (specifically) to innovate upon what had been deemed one of the most ancient principles of the constitution, the hereditary succession to the Crown. For they well knew that the constitution did not attain to its excellence ‡ by a sudden revolution, but by a succession of innovations adapted to the times, and deriving their sources from the general principles of human liberty. But let us now quit this digression in favour of a measure, which, in the opinion of very many friends of their country, would add to the excellence of the form of the constitution, and which might be carried into execution with the

\* The modifications of the constitution may be denominated essential and accidental: that of the distinct branches of the legislature is an example of the former sort; the numbers of each, of the latter. On the essential mode no innovation must be made; the accidental must be subject to change as exigencies require. The distinction, though obvious, appears to have been little attended to.

† 13 Eliz. cap. 1. 6 Anne, cap. 7.

‡ Quasi saltu.

highest propriety, at a time when the addition of a number of new members on one side would repair the loss sustained by a diminution on another part. The adoption, however, of this scheme of a parliamentary reform in the bringing forward, is by no means essential to, an Union with Ireland, useful as it may be to the state, and peculiarly applicable at the time of effecting that great work.

It is reasonable to suppose that a measure so exceedingly extensive in its consequences will meet with some opposition. It is a melancholy trait in the human character, that few as those persons are who know their own interest, the number is still less of those who prefer their country's. Pride, envy, self-interest misunderstood, will throw obstacles in the way of every important measure. Some difficulties certainly may occur in the progress of so weighty an undertaking, but not so many as its enemies could wish to persuade the world. We may recollect, that the great Sir Edward Coke imagined it would be impracticable ever to accomplish an Union with Scotland: that, at the time it was in agitation, that nation was in a ferment, and opposed it as a subversion of their constitution, an annihilation of their commerce, and pregnant with utter ruin to their country. Notwithstanding this it took effect, by the application of those means which alone can carry any great measure into execution, industry, patience, resolution, and perseverance. How much the opposers of it were mistaken the result has proved. And from this example it is now clear, that the difficulty of such an undertaking, ought not to be considered as an obstacle to its accomplishment.

That

\* That Union, though not in all particulars a perfect model for one with Ireland, may yet furnish a general outline to be filled up according to the particular exigencies of the business, which might perhaps be so managed, that even no present disadvantage should arise to any persons; at least, none but such as would be amply counterbalanced by the advantages that would accrue to the public at large. The apprehension of an additional load of taxes will operate most strongly to ~~deter~~ Ireland from acceding to this important measure. The obviating that objection will depend upon a due consideration being paid, on the part of Great Britain, to the incapacity of that country to bear considerable burdens more than she already sustains. Common justice and reason would demand that her relative strength or weakness should be accurately attended to. On such a principle it is not improbable an Union might be completed, without combating many obstacles or experiencing much opposition. However, such is the present divided state of the great councils of the two countries, and so many ills arise from that want of connection, and so great the benefits to the empire at large, and to all its parts, that would result from an Union, that no time should be lost in bringing forward a measure that would add dignity, wealth, unity, glory, stability, and perpetuity to the constitution and empire of Britain.

As every empire naturally seeks her aggrandizement and improvement, and as the benefits which

\* Whoever wishes to read a full account of the measures taken to carry into execution the Union with Scotland, may refer to De Foe's History of that Union.



any part enjoys, in a course of time is diffused through the whole, Great Britain has at different periods, during the dependent state of Ireland, granted her such indulgences, (alas! too few, and too seldom), as were supposed likely to promote her interests and those of the empire. Since her emancipation from the controul of another legislature, a measure, which some professed to imagine would prove highly advantageous to both countries, occupied the attention of either Parliament, under the title of Commercial Propositions. However necessary commercial arrangements might be, these, becoming an object of jealousy, on account of the intermixture of politics, and the commercial advantages to be granted to Ireland being weighed down by (as was supposed) the surrender of legislative independence, in the fourth proposition, met with too powerful an opposition to maintain the field, notwithstanding the victory gained in the first onset; and in withdrawing a measure so opposite to the wishes of the nation at large, the patriot Governor (whose immature dissolution every heart weeps at this moment, and every tongue deploras) riveted to his person and government the affections of a people, his generosity and affability had already won. And by this step too, he made that honest and noble confession, that an instance might occur, in which a vote of the majority of the Commons was not the sense of the people; and exposed to public view and contempt, the daring falsehood of that metaphor, (which Mr. Justice Blackstone called too bold, he had better termed impious,) which ascribes to man, or to any body of men, however august, that awful attribute to God alone, Omnipotence. Perhaps too, in this general outcry against the propositions, the spirit of man uttered much more

more than the words seemed to express; and the nation, sensible of their wants, although not knowing what remedy to apply, yet discerning the absolute inefficacy of a commercial Union for that purpose, with spirit rejected a measure which must have fallen so short of what it proposed, and preferred waiting with patient expectation the application of some more suitable expedient. And this important object, most probably, most certainly, a complete constitutional, parliamentary Union alone can effect. Should commercial propositions again be brought forward, (necessary as commercial regulations are) they will come in such a questionable name, that it is well if they do not raise more murmurs, and excite more discontent in general, than the prospect of an Union would awaken among even the most virulent enemies of the British constitution, and the most bigoted opponents of the Protestant religion.

For the accomplishment of this salutary Union proposed, what period can be so proper as the present, when neither foreign war nor domestic feuds engage the public attention; when the kingdom's finances, resources, and warlike affairs, are in so flourishing a situation, as at this time to bid defiance to the malice or envy of all her natural enemies; when there exist no particular causes or subjects of animosity between the sister countries, and before the enemies of both sow the seeds of dissention, or the well-meaning but misinformed friends of either conceive that their interests can in any case be opposite. How superior is the glory attendant on that minister, who, instead of carrying desolation, rapine, and bloodshed into foreign countries, to encrease an empire already of vast extent, employs the influence of power by uniting  
and

and consolidating all the parts of the dominions Great Britain yet possesses, to promote the prosperity and augment the happiness of the whole!

FINIS.

6 DE 58